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Cover Page : Idol of Sri Ramanuja at Sriperumbudur

Dear Reader,

We are very happy to inform our readers that this Journal is running its 19th year and we have been striving best to satisfy our readers through the Journal **Sri Ramanuja Vani**. When this Journal was started all was well. The cost of printing & paper has gone by heaps and bounds. The Printing of the Journal since Vol. 19 is being done in laser printing & the cost has gone doubled.

We were satisfied with collecting Rs.100/- only for life membership when the Journal was started and we have been doing our best. Since the cost has gone up, we are requesting through this that all those lifemembers who have remitted only 100/- as subscription will whole heartedly contribute another Rs.100/- or more towards the Corpus Fund and such of those who have contributed Rs.150/- will send Rs.50/- or more, so that we will be able to meet out the extra cost, out of the interest received from this fund. I am sure all our life members will not hesitate to help us in this endeavour. Such of those who do not help us now need not think that the Journal will not be sent to them. We will continue to send them also the Journal. However, the cooperation of all life members are solicited.

We have received copies of a very old Book "**Life of Sri Ramanuja**" written by the Late **Alkondavalli Grovindachar**, an authentic author, who has written "the HOLY LIFE of Alvars" republished by the **Visitadvaita Research Centre** and is priced at Rs.95/- postage extra. Copies can be had from this centre by sending a draft for Rs.95+ 15 to **Sri Ramanuja Vedanta Centre**.

Chakknka Audios, 25 **Peyalwar koil St**, **Madras 600 005**, after completing **Mudalayiram** in the **Nalayara dhivaya prabandam** series, have come out with 490 songs of **Nammalwar's Thiruvaimozhi** in 3 cassettes valued @ Rs.32/- each, Postage extra. They have also come out with **Alavandar Sthotram**, **Thirumanjana Gadyam & Stotra Ratna** in one cassette (cost Rs.32) also **Kalsikapuranam** (Rs.32). These two are fluently rendered by **Sri M.A.Vakatakrishnan**. An hour containing cassette of **stotras of Desika** rendered very nicely by **Sri Veeraraghavachariar**, a great scholar & a lucid kalakshepa teller also priced at Rs.32. All cassettes can be sent on orders with draft & postage will be extra.

THE TIMELESS APPEAL OF SRI ANDAL'S TIRUPPAVAI

By Dr.J.Parthasarathi.

One of the Lyrical-Narrative Master Pieces of World Literature.

Sri ANADAL'S lyrical-narrative-dramatic poem of 30 verses called Tiruppavai is a marvel of Tamil Poesy, a thing of beauty and a joy for ever' taking its rank with the best world poems of unspeakable beauty and power. It is a chiselled gem, a finished work of art fashioned by a girl in the teens, involved wholly in her passion for the attainment of Lord Visnu to whom she had lost her heart during the years of her short life ending with her maidenhood. (Besides this poem, she has given us 143 lyrics collected as Nacciyar tirumoli in which lay bare her hopes, fears, dreams, cogitations and frustrations in her overmastering love for the Lord to whom she also addresses with messages for His favour through singing birds and resounding clouds).

The home of her father, the holy man known as Visnucitta (also called Periyalvar), himself a great singer-poet dedicated to the Lord's service in his native town of Srivilliputtur, naturally beathed the air of all-pervasive devotion. She spent her days in the home, engrossed day and night in thinking and speaking and worshipping Him not only with flowers from garden but also with the flowers of her song-compositions. She was born a gifted poetess to whom "the number came" as outpourings of her devotional ecstasies, informed by her rich ancestral learning, imbibed under her paternal roof.

ANDAL RELIVES THE EXPERIENCES OF THE GOPIS:

Dwelling constantly in her mind on Lord Narayana in his various incarnations with their glories and exploits, she often relived the experiences of the Gopi-women who were exceptionally favoured with the immediate presence of Visnu as the Boy Krishna in their midst; and whom they recognised intuitively as their own over-soul. Of particular appeal to her must have been the story of the bathing-observance in the month of Margasirsa (Margali) in which the Gopi-women went as the day dawned collecting their companions together and reached the Yamuna river for a ritual

bath with prayers to attain the Divine Krishna as their Eternal Bridegroom. This story obviously came to her as part of her family lore and we see it narrated in the Bhagavata-Purana also.

Andal chose this story as providing the ideal framework for her celebrating the Lord's glories with a poem of her own composition, enabling her to put on the garb of the Gopi's whose love for Krishna was of the purest and most exalted type of human attachment to the Divine. As she revolved this story in her mind, it underwent a sea-change in the crucible of her imaginative contemplation; it mixed with Tamil traditions of Margali-bathing and got the magical glow of word and phrase which only the chosen masters of poetry- can create in their work.

ANDAL RADICALLY TRANSFORMS THE STORY OF THE

MARGALI-BATHING: bathing as it is remoulded in the Tiruppavai differs vastly from its traditional version seen in the Bhagavata Purana. In the radical transformation of her sources to suit her purposes of His high praise, Andal displays the consummate art of great literary craftsmen like Kamban and Shakespeare. While the Bhagavatam states that the gopi-women went to the Yamuna river bathed therein and offered worship to images of Katyayani (Durga) made by them in the sand. Thiruppavai omits the river-bathing, altogether. The poem however begins with a call to the

Gopi-women to go for the bathing but more importance is attached to their getting the equipment for the ritual bath- the parai or drum- from Krishna, himself, the Lord Narayana and this is declared to be their objective. With this aim, the early risers go to the houses of late risers, wake them up and all together reach Nandagopala's mansion where Krishna, Balarama, Yasoda and Nappinnai live. These inmates of the mansion are woken up by prayerful addresses to them in several verses; the women then present their own requests not only for the drum, now revised as many huge drums but also for sounding conches resembling the Lord's own Pancajanya lingers of benedictions, beautiful lamps, flags and canopies shutting out the season's cold; (verse 26). And they standing in full view of Divinity Incarnate and drinking deep of the Divine presence, forget their bathing ceremony and speak of the rewards of their singing His praises- bracelets for the hands and shoulders, flowers and other ornaments for the ear and anklets and such others besides new clothes and milk-white rice-food

dripping with ghee on their elbows as they take it to their lips. (verse 27). Indeed, Krishna would put the jewels and clothes on them and eat the milk-white rice-food in their company.

Drunk with the Krishna experience they go to the ultimate limit; it is not for the drum (and the other equipment of fleeting value) that they have come to him; he, born in their own community and class of cowherds cannot help taking their loving services for himself, and putting them in his retinue. This is their lofty goal for ever, and in whatever birth which he takes, they should be linked to them; it should be given to them to serve him without intermission; all their other desires should get consummated in this supreme desire ! This grand supplication of the gopi-women in the penultimate verse of the poem is its climax and finale, and observance which began as Margali bathing call, is metamorphosed as a progress to Krishna's mansion and submission to Him of a request for eternal service under his roof, with this change we do not ask if the gopies carried out their bath as first intended; we believe they went away, brimming with Krishna's favour in which they were fully bathed and for which they had fasted, marched and assembled at his palace.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TIRUPPAVAI AND BHAGAVATA:

The Bhagavata story makes mention of only a journey of the gopi-women to the Yamuna river and not to Krishna's mansion and thus the situation of Krishna granting high audience to the cowherd-women and their moving supplications and prayers to the Divine one and his closest kinsmen born in their midst do not arise there. It all springs from the creative imagination of the matchless poetess of 'southern viliputtur'. Again, it is her shaping imagination which has devised various situations evoking the sights and sounds and scents of the cowherd-colony as the early risers call up individually the late risers among the gopis in the early dawn. The cowherd-colony of the dim past comes alive before us as a village settlement of cowherds in the Tamil land (in verses 6 to 15 of the poem).

THE TAMILISED COWHERD VILLAGE OF TIRUPPAVAI:

Birds chirp in the early dawn; the conch in the temple of the Lord Garuda blares forth; sages contemplating Him and devotees engaged in His services chant the name of Hari and the sound travels all around (verse 6). The anaiccatham birds, male

and female, twitter about causing much noise; the elder cowherd women churn curds for getting butter in their homes, as their hands go up and down and the jingling noise of their ornaments mixes with noise of the churning (verse 7). The east has silvery streaks announcing the coming of day soon; buffaloes have been let off to graze a little allowing them to yield rich milk at the milking time near at hand. This is a detail known only to dwellers in pastoral colonies (verse 8). In one beautiful mansion set with purest rayed gems, a gopi-maid sleeps on her bed (having reposed all her trust and love in the Lord and therefore free of care) with lamps shedding light and incense spreading perfume around her (This picture of cosy warmth is set against the prevailing cold and morning frost outside, mentioned in other verses) and reminds readers of a poem like Keat's St. Agnes. The cowherd settlement has a wealth of milch cows ever yielding milk (by Krishna's grace); as these feeling solicitude for their calves, flood their udders with overflowing milk house-fronts become wet and slushy, such is the opulence of the pastoral scene (verses 11 and 12). The Cenkalunir-flower in the backyard-gardens of some houses in the colony blossoms as it does in the day-time and the ampal flower closes itself against the oncoming sunlight ascetics with ochre robe contrasting with their white teeth go to their temples to blow conches as a token of the worship beginning. This literary art which has brought together so many visual, auditory and olfactory images comes with ease only to those of divinely inspired learning and poetic craftsmanship.

TIRUPPAVAI COMPOSED BY ANDAL AS A DRAMA:

The Tamilisation (as we may call it) of the 'Krishna-yatra' and the cowherd settlement, goes along with masterly use of the Tamil metre of the koccakakkalipa of eight lines and its regulated cadences. Andal herself calls her poem aptly *cankat tamil-malai* (garland of sangam (classical) Tamil poetry) and this is true in a special and so far unnoticed sense. All the verses in Tiruppavai are dramatic monologues (speeches) spoken by either the gopis collectively in some contexts and by their groups in some other contexts. There is no narration at all in the poem; the links between the dramatic speeches are left to be inferred by the hearer or reader; this is exactly what we find in Tamil classical poems included in Kuruntokai, Ahananuru etc; here each verse is a monologue by a character according to a well-understood

tradition. It is thus true to say that Tiruppavai arises as the crest-jewel of the tradition of dramatic poems constituting 'cankattamil' one can even now stage it as drama, assigning speeches to gopi-characters collectively and individually.

ENDLESS MYSTIC PHILOSOPHICAL NUANCES:

We have so far indicated in outline, the literary excellences which put the Tiruppavai with the best lyrical narratives of the world. This is only one side (and perhaps the side of lesser importance) of the medal. The other side of this immortal composition as a poem of nuances and implications of religio-mystic import also entitles it to a rank among the world's greatest poems on the religious life of devotion to the Lord as Narayana. Generations of our great preceptors through the centuries devoted themselves to the study and teachings of this work and their commentarial labours of love have provided a vast literature full of insights on the Sri Vaishnava practice of absolute refuge in the Lord as the way and Goal of man's endeavours, with sidelights on many aspects of the religious life like the individual soul's essentials dependence on Him, the necessity of the service of the devoted ones of the Lord whose pleasure is the Lord's own; they have cited parallels from the upanishads and the Itihasas and Puranas and mystical works in Tamil including those of other Alvars, and elaborated the dhvani-implications of words and phrases and lines of Andal in multi-dimensional ways.

AN ETERNAL PILGRIM'S PROGRESS TO DIVINITY:

Allegorical parallelisms called svapadesa arthas have been offered suggesting how the verses from 6 to 15 of this poem may indicate the Alvars and Acaryas. All these show the inexhaustible symbolism inherent in the basic structure of the story of this superb poem as a Pilgrimage to the Divine calling all those interested in seeking Him; these may be differently identified by verbal nuances. It is a supreme Pilgrims Progress on the Sri Vaishnava path; it gathers those interested in going to the Divine for the sake of the going and as an end in itself. The experience of the pilgrimage is experience of the Divine sought by the seeker for its own sake and longed for by him as the experience culminating in the attainment of the Divine.

In reading Tiruppavai we travel with the gopis on their timeless journey to God and lose ourselves in an experience of total bliss.

News & Notes

Sri Ramanuja Vani has great pleasure in sharing with its family of readers and well wishers the news of the recent celebration of the eighty first birthday of its editor. Dr.J.Parthasarathi with worship and adhyayanams in his home. Following the late lamented Prof. M.R.Sampathkumaran the distinguished first editor of this journal, he has been rendering inestimable service to it. In his literary and philosophical pursuits he has made a mark with significant contributions. Readers will be happy to know that he, jointly with his son-in-law Sri.P.B.Rangachari, has given a donation of Rs.5000/-to be added to the corpus of the fund from which Sri Ramanuja Vani is run. This boost to the journal will be greatly appreciated on all sides. The Journal wishes him many more long years of service to Sri Vaishnava learning in its multifarious aspects. * * * *

We are much obliged to our companion Sri Vaishnava journal Sri Vaishnava Sudarsanam for bringing to public attention, in its Margali issue (December 1995) the serious violation of the Agamic practice which govern the Tirumalai Tirupati Tiruchanur temples which occurred in the Pancami tirtha Brahmotsavam at Tiruchanur from 23.11.95. Sri.Alarmelmangai the consort of Lord Srinivasa was taken on procession on the Simhavahana dressed as Durga having 8 hands with vibhuti on her forehead on one day, on another day she had a cup in her hands and she was said to represent Annapurani, on some other days one could see a lance with vibhuti placed over the frame of the thiruvasi as the Deity was taken round. All these are unknown in the history of the temple strictly governed by Sri Vaishnava practices which abhor such violation of the ethos of Narayana worship. These have caused great sorrow to the Sri Vaishnava community which has now come to know it, this sorrow will be shared by all throughout India to end these violations of Sri Vaishnava manner of temple maintenance and worship with a hoary maintenance and worship with a hoary past. It also urges readers to send petitions signed by large number of worshippers to the T.T.D and the Chief Secretary Andhra Pradesh Govt. Hyderabad.

PERIA ALWAR - THIRUMOZHI

Ms. M.S. Ramesh, I.A.S (Retd.)

Peria Alwar in his pasurams 23 to 43 in Thirumozhi dons the role of Yasoda and describes the beauty of each of the limbs of the child Krishna and shares the happiness with the ladies in Gokulam. In these Pasurams Peria Alwar describes the Lord from feet upwards (Thiruvadi) to the crowing glory, namely the hari (Thirumudi). The only other Alwar who has described the Lord in such great detail is Thiruppan Alwar who has described the Lord in such great detail in his Amalanadipiran. In this article an attempt is therefore made to present the description of the different limbs as given by Peria Alwar and Thiruppan Alwar. Pillai Lokam Jeer has identified the Pasurams in Thirumozhi, which correspond with the Pasurams in Amalandipiran in describing the specific limbs of the Lord.

In the following paras I propose to juxtapose the pasurams in Thirumozhi and Amalanadipiran with their meanings. Whereever possible an attempt will be made to correlate and present description given by these two savants along with that given by Sri Ramanuja in Vaikunta Gadya.

In the Pasuram starting with the words 'Seetha Kadal Uil' (Thirupparkadal, i.e. COSMIC OCEAN) Peria Alwar becomes Yasoda, who as doting mother holds the child Krishna in her hands and calls other women living in Gokulam to come and see for themselves the enchanting, captivating beauty of each of the limbs of the Lord.

PERIA ALVAR PASURAM 23 (THIRUMOZHI) THIRUVADI :

Peria Alwar (as Yasoda) says : "Oh ye women with coral like lips I come and see the beautiful lotus-like feet of this child ! See this little child Krishna holding with his one hand the toe of his foot and placing it in his mouth, obviously happy in sucking that 'amrith'. Devaki who is none else but Mahalakshmi who emerged like 'Amrit' when the cosmic ocean was churned has sent this child to me, Yasoda, whose hair is adorned with beautiful flowers."

In this Pasuram the Alwar has therefore made it clear that Devaki is none else but Mahalakshmi and that the child who has put its foot into its mouth is enjoying the whole episode and is as happy as he would be drinking honey! The Vedas while describing the feet of the Lord says: "VISHNU PADAE PARAMAE MADHVA UTSAHA". This means that the feet of the Lord are sweet like honey. The Alvar also while describing the Thiruvadi of the Perumal very often use the words "There Malarum Thiru Padam" (Honey over flowing divine feet). Peria Alwar in this pasuram refers to a common sight of an young child catching hold of its toe and putting it into its mouth and yet conveys through that simple act a vedic truth ! We notice that in this Pasuram Devaki is referred to as "Seeta Kadal Ull Amuda Enna Devaki". This refers to the fact that when the Cosmic Ocean was churned for 'Amrith' (nectar) Mahalakshmi who is sweeter than that 'Amrith' emerged from that Ocean. Hence it is the Alwar refers to Devaki as Mahalakshmi emerged out of the cool Thriupparkadal, i.e. Cosmic Ocean.

Having seen the description of the "Thiruvadi" as given by Peria Alwar, let us now turn to the description of the "Thiruvadi" as given by Thiruppan Alwar In Amalanadipiran.

THIRUPPAN ALWAR : PASURAM 927 :

Thiruppan Alwar compares the Thiruvadi to "Kamalapada", i.e. he says His feet are Lotusses themselves. That is why it is often said that even the divine Consort, i.e. Mahalakshmi hesitates to press His feet with her hands, lest the flowers should fade with even her delicate soft touch (i.e. denotes the komala and mridu swabhava). Similar thoughts were expressed by Manavala Mamuni while referring to the beauty of the Lord's Thirumeni (The Divine form) when he used the words 'Chonnalae Kanni Pogum Thirumeni' i.e. even if we speak about the beauty of the Lord's Thirumeni it will become red. Such is the delicate beauty of the Lord. Now to continue with the description of Thiruvadi as given in Amaladipiran, the Alwar says : Oh Lord ! you, who are the creator of the Universe. You are the epitome of excellence (Perisudhan) You are my friend, philosopher and guide. You came from paramapadam and took residence at Thirumalai, full of scented groves. You, out of your abundant generosity, on your own shower bliss on your devotees. You are the sure Protector of

all those who seek succour at your feet. You are plemishless. You are seen in the lyingdown posture in Srirangam full of lofty mansions. Even Mahalakshmi the Consort of Ranganatha hesitates to press your Lotus-like feet. My eyes are filled with the sight of those Divine Feet. I hope even unwittingly my eyes should not be the cause for causing any evil to that Divine Sight. Thus the Alwar hopes that he will not cast 'Drushti' (evileye) on that Beautiful Sight. The Alwar says that the feet, silently, eloquently filled the range of his vision and ordered him to bow down his head before them.

He addresses the Lord as "Amalan". Similar thoughts are expressed by Nammalwar in his Thiruvaimozhi first Pasuram, when he uses the words "Uyar Vara Uyar Nalam Udayavan". The word, 'Adi' used by Thiruppan Alwar corresponds to the word 'Evan' used by Nammalwar. The word 'Piran' used by Thiruppan Alwar corresponds to the meaning conveyed by the words "Mayar vara Madhi Nalam Arulinan" used by Nammalwar i.e. Nammalwar says that He is the Supreme one who bestowed on me knowledge which dispelled ignorance. When Thiruppan Alwar uses the words 'Adiyar' Nammalwar uses the words "Payilum Sudar Oli", the word "Vinnavar Kone" used by Thiruppan Alwar correspond to the words "Ayar Varum Amarargal adhipathi", i.e. the head of the Nityasooris living in paramapadam. The words 'Thozhudezhu' used by Thiruppan Alwar also corresponds to the same word used by Nammalwar with this difference : that Nammalwar used the words to direct the devotees to bow down his head before the Lord's feet whereas Thiruppan Alwar says that those beautiful Feet came before him and compelled him to bow down before Them. This close affinity in the words used by the two Alwars while praising the Feet of the Lord are strikingly beautiful.

SRI RAMANUJA :

Sri Ramanuja in his Vaikunta Gadhyam also refers to the efficacy of bowing down before the Lord's Feet. He says that one should offer to do 'Kainkarya' to God and when God accepts the offer (Sweekrutha) He will place his Divine Lotus Feet on the supplicant's head (Siraseekurtham). The contact with the Thiruvadi makes one experience joy as if one has had a dip in an ocean of nectar , i.e. "AMRITHA SAAGARA ANTARNIMAGNAM" and

"SARVA ANAYATASUKHAMASITHA" i.e. with His blessing only one's body experiences joy and bliss: This compulsion to seek the Lord's grace by seeking his feet is expressed beautifully by the Alvar when he says "Thia madu Kaprae polae than thuzhaiven Adikke Oye Naadikollum". i.e. Oh ye mortal seek the Feet of the Perumal even as a calf goes seeking its mother cow. Only then 'Swami Sambandha' gets established and the devotee becomes 'Swa' i.e. the property and the Perumal is 'Swami' i.e. the owner of that property. This is again explained clearly when it is said.

"SWATHWAM ATMANE SANYETHAM "

"SWATHWAM BRAHMENI STITHAM"

i.e. 'Jeevatma' has the quality of a thing a piece of property; the Lord has the quality of the Owner of that property.

PERIA ALVAR THIRUMOZHI : TOES : PASURAM 24 :

In this Pasuram Peria Alvar as Yasoda calls the other women in Gokulam to come and see the beauty of the well matched delicate toes of the child Krishna. She says : Oh Ye women! Come here and look at the beauty of the child's forehead. Do not miss the beauty of the ten toes of the Lotus Feet of the Beautiful blue hued Lord Krishna. It is as if pearls, rubies, diamonds and gold beads are alternately kept in a line like in a well set ornament.

As is well known the precious stones are Navaratnas, namely 'Gomedhakam' 'Neelam' 'Pavazham' 'Pushparagam' 'Maragatham' 'Manickyam' 'Muthu' 'Vaidhuryam' and 'Vairam' as the child has ten toes, Alvar has added of these Navaratnas, gold and thus compares ten toes to ten precious stones and metals.

PERIA ALVAR THIRUMOZHI : ANKLES : PASURAM 25 :

In this song Alvar as Yasoda calls the women of Gokulam to come and have a darshan of the Lotus feet of the Lord. She says Oh Ye beautiful women, come and have a look at the beauty of the ankles of my child Krishna adorned with silver anklets. He is lying down contented and happy after having drunk his fill of the milk so affectionately given by me, Yasoda, whose shoulders are slim like bamboos.

In this Pasuram the Alvar as Yasoda is eager to share the happiness of enjoying the sight of the divine ankles with the other women in Gokulam.

PERIA ALVAR'S THIRUMOZHI : KNEES : PASURAM 26 :

Here again the Alvar as Yasoda describes the beauty of the knees of the crawling child Krishna. The Alvar says : Oh ye beautiful ladies come and have a look at the beauty of the knees of the child Krishna who out of fear is trying to crawl away and escape from me, even as I have taken coir rope used with the churner while churning to threaten him, as I saw him consume pots of scented fresh ghee kept by us. Seeing him consume all the ghee I was frightened for his very life as I thought I have lost him (i.e. I thought he would die).

Here the Alvar describes a simple domestic scene. The crawling child Krishna apparently broke the pots of freshly churned butter and ghee and consumed the whole lot kept by the womenfolk in Gokulam. Yasoda caught him in this act and she thought that she had lost her child as he consumed too much of ghee. In her anger she caught hold of him, dragged him near the place where she had kept the old coir rope tied to a churner picked the rope and wanted to hit the child. She raised her arm and she could see the fear on the face of the child who started to crawl away from her. As he was crawling she noticed the beauty of his knees and immediately forgot all her anger and instead started calling out to her companions to come and see that enchanting, beautiful knee !

PERIA ALVAR'S THIRUMOZHI : THIGHS : PASURAM 27 :

In this pasuram the Alvar as Yasoda describes the beauty of the thighs of the child Krishna.

Yasoda, says, Oh Ye Beautiful Ladies : Come and look at the beauty of the thighs of this child Krishna who is pretending to be sleeping as if he is an innocent child. He is the one who once upon a time tore the chest of Hiranyan the demon and also sucked the milk from Poothana the demon till she died.

The Alvar makes it clear that the Lord who manifested himself as Narasimha is none other than the Lord Krishna himself.

The Alvar uses the words 'Uranguvan pola' Literally translated it means He is pretending to be asleep, i.e. he is referring to the 'Yoga nidra' pose of the Lord while at Thirupparkadal where though He appears to be sleeping, He is ever alert to rush to the rescue of the suffering humanity by manifesting Himself into different Avatars. All the Avatars emanate from Thirupparkadal.

PERIA ALVAR'S THIRUMOZHI : WAIST : PASURAM 28 :

In this Pasuram the Alvar describes the captivating beauty of the Lord's body below the Waist. Here again the Alvar as Yasodha describes the beauty of the child Krishna.

Yasodha Says : Oh ye Women ! with beautiful smiles ! Come and see the beauty of the body below the waist of this child Krishna who was born on the 10th day after the Hastha star, to Devaki, who was never away from the thoughts of Vasudeva who owned innumerable mighty elephants.

The Alvar uses a devious method to describe the birth star of the child Krishna i.e. "Athathin patthaa naal" i.e. 10th day from Hastha star. If you count back from Hastham star it is Rohini ; if you count forward from Hastham star it is Thiruvonam, Rohini is the birth star of Lord Krishna while it is Thiruvonam which is the birth star of Perumal. Thus, either way the 10th star from Hastham denotes the birth star of Perumal as Lord Krishna or as Perumal as such. It is said the Peria Alvar did not want to specifically mention the star Rohini lest walls should have ears and the enemies who may be listening come to know of the birth of Krishna and at the behest of Kamsa kill the child Krishna. He felt that coming to know of the exact birth star they may try to sponsor some 'Abhichara yagam', i.e. sacrifices which are performed only to invoke evil spirits. Peria Alvar as Yasodha was therefore worried and wanted to maintain perfect secrecy with reference to the birth star of Lord Krishna. Hence he uses words like a cross word puzzle and says 'Athathin patthaam naal'.

While referring to Vasudeva the Alvar qualifies him with two qualities namely i.e. that his mind was always full of numerous mighty elephants (Matha Yanaigal)

PERIA ALVAR'S THIRUMOZHI : WAIST : PASURAM 29 :

In this Pasuram the Alvar is lost in the beauty of the waist of the Lord Krishna.

Yasoda (The Alvar) says : Oh ye Beautiful ladies! with bright foreheads! come and see this beautiful waist of Krishna, the supreme Lord! He is the one who broke the tusks of the mighty elephant kuvalayapeetam and killed it and its mahout and then ran with those two tusks, searching for Kamsa who had hid himself to escape the wrath of Krishna ! Look at this waist adorned with the beautiful waist and the waist band strung alternately with a pearl and coral stone.

In this Pasuram the Alvar describes the beautiful waist and the ornaments adorning that waist of the child Krishna. He refers to the incident when Kamsa arranged an archery contest and invited Krishna and Balarama for that contest. The two brothers came from Gokulam and were about to enter the palace of Kamsa when the mahout let loose the mighty elephant kuvalayapeetam on them. Krishna took it on single handed, broke its tusks killed the mahout and the elephant and went armed with those tusks to kill Kamsa who had meantime hid himself in the palace. Yasodha says, Oh ye beautiful women! Come and see the beautiful waist of such a Krishna.

PERIA ALVAR'S THIRUMOZHI : NAVEL : PASURAM 30 :

In this Pasuram the Alvar describes the beauty of the navel of the Lord (Nabhi Kamalam).

Yasodha calls the womenfolk of Gokulam to come and share with her the joy of seeing the beautiful navel. She says : Oh ye ladies adorned with shining bright ornaments! Come here! Have a look at the beautiful 'Nabhi Kamalam' (navel) of Lord Krishna. He is the one, who always stood out prominently amongst all the children who came to play with him. He looked like a veritable elephant calf whose tusks were just growing and was therefore full of the life and rearing to show off his strength. He is the son of Nandagopa, Come and look at the beauty of his 'Nabhi Kamalam' (navel).

In this Pasuram the Alvar says that even while playing with his friends Krishna stood head and shoulders above them.

He had them all under his perfect control. He looked like a mighty elephant calf which though young was full of the promise of absolute overlordship and superiority. 'Nabhi Kamalam' is the place from where Brahma the Creator emerged. Yet when and Lord is in Thirupparkadal or Paramapada, it is impossible even for Brahma to have a darshan of the Lord. But Yasodha is able to make the Aayarkula womenfolk in Gokulam to easily have the darshan of the Divine Feet as well as the 'Nabhi kamalam' of the Lord.

PERIA ALVAR'S THIRUMOZHI : STOMACH : PASURAM 31 :

In this Pasuram Peria Alvar as Yasodha describes the beauty of the stomach of the child Krishna. When the child was young he would visit all the houses in Gokulam and even if they had kept the curds, milk and butter beyond his reach hanging from pots from the roof, he would climb on to some stool to reach these pots or break them stealthily, empty their contents into his stomach. All the Edayar womenfolk in Gokulam would come rushing to Yasodha and complain to her about these pranks of the child Krishna. Enraged Yasodha decided that the moment child returns home she would tie him to the pestle with a coir rope around his waist and she did it accordingly. And then when she had a look at the child she felt mesmerised and lost in the beauty of the stomach of the child Krishna. It is in that context that the Alvar sings this song.

In this pasuram the Alvar says : Oh ye women wearing shining bright bangles on your arms! come here and look at this child. Look at this child's stomach. Are not you taken in by its beauty? This is the child whom yasodha first fed with milk and without letting him know her real intentions viz., to catch the elusive mischievous child and tie him up to punish him, caught him and tied him up at the waist with an old coir rope. He is the Lord who has the dark blue colour of a noisy disturbed ocean.

Peria Alvar describes the dark hued Krishna as having the colour of a disturbed ocean, i.e. dark jet black hum. As is well known the Lord allowed himself to be tied only by two persons. One was Yasodha and the other was Shatrugna. As proof of this incident, it is said that even today the Moolavar in Srirangam temple bears marks on his stomach which resemble the imprint of the coir rope tied by Yasodha when the Lord was a child Krishna

(to be continued).

SRI RAMANUJA'S INTERPRETATION OF 'SVARGA' IN KATHOPANISAD

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The prime concern of man is to live happily in this world. This attitude of man transcends all barriers of caste, creed, clime and religion. This happiness is of two kinds - Yoga and Kshema. Lord Krishna declared in the Bhagavad Gita (Bh.G IX 22) that the individual need not feel concerned about these two but he would look after them in the case of those who are ever fixed in Him. The next normal concern of man is regarding what happens to him after death. Science is trying to unravel this mystery whereas Vedanta has solved this problem of eschatology. Man would not like to part with his happiness even in his life after death and various systems of philosophy have tried to define the form and content of the happiness. One is supposed to enjoy in his life after death. All philosophers are in agreement that true happiness lies in salvation. The differences come in while defining salvation. The soteriological differences persist even in one and the same system because a soteriological solution is the projection of the mind in the light of the interpretation of the scriptures chief among them being the Upanisads.

The problem of salvation centres round the nature of the soul aspiring salvation (mumukshu) the nature of the supreme Being, and the means of salvation. That is concerned with these three quests is clearly stated by Sri Ramanuja while commenting on the Brahma Sutra (B.S) I iv. 6-"In this context there is mention of only three"

He observes thus:

As this third boon he, in the form of a question referring to final release, actually enquires about three things, viz, the nature of the end to be reached i.e. release, the nature of him who wishes to reach that end, and the nature of the means to reach it i.e. of meditation assisted by certain works. The siddhanta of Attradhikarana (B.S.I ii 9-12) Pramitadhikarana (I Bid, I ii 23-24,

40-41) and Anumanikadhikarana (Ibid, I iv. 1-7) aiming at defining the nature of the Supreme Self has been arrived at Sribhasya with the help of the passages occurring in Kathopanisd (KU) Rangaramanuja remarks twice in his summary at the end of his commentary on KU that the entire Upanisd is devoted to establishing the Supreme Self. The KU answers the problems of eschatology and the nature of the Beatitute through a lively conversation between Naciketas a young aspirant after Truth and Mrtyu (the god of death) who holds the key to the problems of death and salvation.

In the well know episode in KU in the second boon Naciketas prays for 'Svarga' which is interpreted by Rangaramanuja (Rr.) as moksa.

" There is no fear whatever in the Svarga (heaven). You are not (present) there. One is not afraid of old age. Getting over the two, hunger and thirst, transcending sorrow one delights in the Svarga"

The phrases Svargeloke and Svargaloke are interpreted as Moksa. This interpretation is very much different from Sankara's point of view. He takes the term Svarga to mean the Svarga of transitory joy from where one has to return to the earth. The absence of fear, old age, hunger and thirst is taken by Rr. to signify Moksa where the above defects are totally absent and this interpretation follows the point of view of Sri Ramanuaja.

Naciketas is also defined as one who has the requisite urge for Moksa. Shradhadhanaya is interpreted as Moksa sradhavate in Mantra 13 . In the same Mantra the term'svargaloke' is interpreted consistently as those who have attained the Supreme Abode. The immortality referred to here is the manifestation of one's own nature which comes after the attainment of brahman in 'that' place, i.e. the Supreme Abode, as enjoined in . Chandogya Upanisd (Ch. U VIII. 3.) This place is spoken of as 'anantalokah', which is the world of Vishu, later on referred to as 'that supreme Abode of Visnu (KU.I.iii.9), from where one never returns ('Pratistha' explained by Rr. as a punaravrtti) The knowledge of this 'Heavenly Fire' (Svargya agni) is the cause of liberation and is a subsidiary to the meditation on Brahman placed in the cave.

The problem now is how can the term 'svarga' indicate 'moksa' while its popular meaning is the heaven of opulence and

great joy? The straight answer is found in the observation of Sri. Ramanuja's Sribhasya on B.S.I. iv.6.

It is the abode of liberation which is the highest end, that is meant by the word 'Svarga' here because the text 'those that live in svarga attain immortality' (KU.I.i.13) states that for one who is there 'there is neither birth nor death' and because later the actions where fruits are transitory are condemned ; further the reply is 'one learning three aṅgavakas dealing with Naciketas and performing three actions attaining contact with (brahmopasana) by the three (fires) crosses over birth and death'

There is no room for any doubt since the Bhasyakara himself has explicitly and impliedly explained that the liberation of the form of unbounded bliss can be meant by the term 'svarga' signifying supreme happiness because it cannot be that Naciketas whose face is turned away from perishable ends can ask for the means for attaining a 'svarga' that is transitory as he scorns at the transitory ends when asking for the third boon.

The above view is established by Rr.by raising possible objections and by providing them with suitable answer.

The primary objection is that while interpreting the term 'svarga' referred to four times in two mantras (Ibid. I.i 12-13) in the sense of 'Moksa' direct meaning of the term is sacrificed and that there is no valid reason for doing so. The meaning cannot be got through primary significance because the term 'svarga' is understood in the Vedic and the worldly usage as the opposite of Final Release. 'Svarga' is normally understood as the opposite of 'Apavarga' or Moksa. Here svarga does not mean liberation but one that is desired by all. Further in the Puranas like for example Visṇupurana (11.7.18) 'svarga' is described as a place extending to fourteen lakhs of miles between the sun and the Pole star.

It is this place that is referred to in the Vedic and common parlance. If it is maintained that the meaning of 'moksa' is got from 'svarga' through secondary significance what is it that contradicts the primary sense ?

(i) Is it the mention of the absence of old age and death and the attainment of immortality etc., mentioned in the text (KU I i 12)?

The answer is that the term 'amartatva' (Ibid. I i 13) cannot be strained to yield the meaning of 'moksa' because it is the substantive and because the term 'amrta' signifies relative immortality as supported by Vedic and worldly usages. In the Puranic passages it is found that those who dwell in svarga are free from old age, death, hunger, thirst, sorrow etc. According to smṛti passage Immortality is spoken of as existence till deluge. Further in the KU itself the term 'amrta' is used in the sense of death (Ibid. I.i.29) The passage 'Svargaloka Amratvam Bhajante' should be understood in the light of passages like 'Te Brahmaloke Tu Paramatakatē' etc. Mundaka Upanisad III. ii. 6 and Taittiriya Aranyaka X. 10. 3 that those who stay in svarga can attain immortality through meditation upon Brahman. So the mention of absence of old age, death etc. cannot be the reason for interpreting the term 'svarga' as 'final release'. When it is said 'X is charming' based on the term 'charming X' cannot be equated to with Y who is exceedingly charming.

(ii) Is it the crossing over of old age etc. contained in the reply (KU. I. I. 17) ?

No. This mantra (Ibid. I.i.17) may mean that the Naciketa Agni Leading to svarga performed thrice is the means to Brahmajñana that enables the crossing over birth and death and so, it does not contradict the primary sense. The next passage 'Soketige Modate Svargaloke' (Ibid. I i 18) which is identical with the previous one, also does not contradict the primary sense of 'svarga'.

(iii) Can it be the transitory 'svarga' that is wished for by Naciketas who is indifferent to worldly desires?

It may be argued that Naciketas who scorns at worldly desires cannot ask for transitory 'svarga' Only after Yama's references to liberation. Naciketas evinced an interest in liberation. Therefore his later attitude cannot contradict his earlier desire for svarga of the limited joy. If 'svarga' should refer to 'liberation' it can be the result of knowledge but not of 'Naciketa Agni'.

Even if there is contradiction in the reply, according to Upakramadhi karana nyaya of Jaiminiya Mimamsa sutra (III. iii. 1-7) the term 'svarga' occurring in the question stated first is quite

stomg. Further according to the sūtra (Ibid. XII. ii.25) what is stated first is stronger than those at the end though numerically they are large. Thus there is no valid reason for rejecting the primary sense of 'svarga'

The answer to the above objection can be summarised as follows-the term 'svarga' signifies the abode of liberation through primary significance only. In the Svargakamadhikarana (Ibid. VI.i.1) the Mimamsakas hold that according to the principle of *Nagrhita-visesana nyaya* (the cognition does not grasp the substantive without grasping the attribute) the word 'svarga' signifies only 'delight' but not the object that confers it. Further the term 'svarga' cannot indicate a delight enjoyable in a different body and a different place. The problem of the word 'svarga' signifying limited delight or delight in general (Pritimatra) is solved by them by citing sacrifices like *gyotistoma* with great pains (by mobilising money, men and labour) and which must necessarily indicate extraordinary delight (one need not resort to the painful method of sacrifices, if the reward is ordinary delight, which can be obtained by easier means). It cannot be argued that 'svarga' in Vedic Parlance signifies unlimited delight and in the worldly usage 'delight in general'. When the Vedic significance is understood, the meaning 'limited worldly delight' can be had through secondary significance because there is a common meaning of delight. There is thus no delimiting factor in regard to unlimited delight and so the word 'svarga' can be reasonably equated with liberation. Even though the word 'svarga' is normally used to denote the joy of heaven (lying between the Pole Star and the Sun) it does not lose its primary signifying power to indicate the abode of liberation, just as the word 'Partha' normally used to signify Arjuna signifies the other sons of Kunti also through its primary signifying power. Similarly the terms *barhis*, *ajya* etc. (referred to in *Barhirajyadhikarna* Ibid I.iv.10) used in respect of their generic character of grassness etc. Therefore there is nothing wrong in the word 'svarga' denoting liberation also. Further objections are raised against the above points. The terms *barhis* etc., may not be used in the sense of unpurified grass etc. by noble men but such a use is found among unrefined people. Since the word 'svarga' signifies the world lying between the Pole Star and the Sun, to accept the signification of 'svarga' according to Vedantins

the word must not indicate anything other than 'liberation'. And as 'svarga' is not found to carry the primary significance of 'liberation' it is not correct to use it in that sense.

The Siddhantin presents the following points to offer a convincing explanation for interpreting the term 'svarga' primarily as meaning liberation or abode of liberation.

1) If the word 'svarga' is not used to denote anything other than the popular svarga (lying between the Pole Star and the Sun) it becomes necessary to restrict its denotation as not applicable to 'liberation'. But in the following passage it is used in the sense of liberation.

"In that city there is a world -sheath of golden colour surrounded by light. Whoever knows that city of Brahman surrounded by nectar (bliss), to him the Supreme Self and Brahma grant long life, fame and progeny". (Taittiriya Aranyaka I-27-3)

"By it the wise, the knowers of Brahman, go up hence to the heavenly world, released." (B.K.V.IV - 4-8)

"He verily who knows it, thus striking off evil becomes established in the most excellent, endless heavenly world" (K.V.IV-9)

2) The Puranic significance of 'svarga' must be ignored as in the case of 'avyakta' of the sankhyas. Sankara while commenting on 'svarga lokah' explains it as the 'place called vairaja which is different from the popular puranic 'svarga'.

If the signification of Vairaja is through primary significance, so also is the signification of Brahmaloaka. The expression 'Svarga pavargabhyam' need not indicate two separate locations but may indicate 'Apavarga' following the principle of Brahmana parivrajaka (Brahmin mendicant)

If it is to be argued that since the primary sense of the popular 'svarga' has some contradictions, the sense of liberation is to be had through secondary significance, it is worth knowing the contradictions. By the passage 'or a bhayam' the freedom from sin is mentioned. The fear here is the fear of fall from heaven due to some sin or other. The absence of such a fear is possible only in the case of one who is totally free from sin. The passage (you are

not powerful there) indicates freedom from death and the passage 'one does not fear old age' indicates freedom from old age. By the passage 'having crossed' over hunger and thirst, absence of hunger and absence of thirst are mentioned. The passage 'one enjoys the world of svarga' indicates the nature of one whose desires are completely realized and the nature of one whose will is always true. This is supported by the passage from Chandogya (VII.ii.1). Since the eight qualities of Brahman which are referred to in Adhyatma sastra, manifest in that place (svarga). It is not proper to consider 'svarga' as a place of relative absence of old age, death etc. found in the popular puranic svarga. This is also stated later as 'modaniya' which is interpreted by Rr. as 'one's own nature which is the object of pleasure and which is qualified by the eight qualities like freedom from sin etc.' The following textual information strengthens the above conclusion.

1. (KU.I.i.13) those living in the world of svarga attain immortality.

2. (KU.I.i.29) (Having become aware of those that never age and are immortal). On this mantra the passage 'ajiriyatamatanam' refers to the absolutely free soul and not relatively immortal beings'. Here the term 'amrta' is identical with the term 'amrtatva' used in the metaphysical literature.

3. The terms 'nityam' (eternal) in (K.U.I.2-10) and abhayam param (the fearless shore) in (K.U.I.3-2) indicate a place of non return and hence 'svarga' cannot mean the popular puranic svarga of transitory joy.

4. It goes against a reasoned judgement, to argue that Naciketas has spurned every thing other than Brahman. The mimamsakas have established that what is first mentioned is strong only when there is mutual contradiction between things that are mentioned later. When things mentioned at the end are greater in number, the majority of one type will prevail. In the Indrapranadhikarana it is established that the characteristics of the soul are to be renounced in preference to many more qualities pertaining to the Supreme Soul.

The passage Page 146 of Sri Bhagavad Ramanuja Granthamala by Sri PBA means as follows 'Wherever particular

individual selves from the four-faced Brahma down words and particular non-intelligent things from the prakrti downwards are found mentioned in association with the peculiarly characteristic attributes of the Supreme Self, or wherever the words denoting them (i.e.) those intelligent individual selves and those non-intelligent things) are seen to be grammatically equated with the words denoting the Supreme Self ; in all such cases, what is intended to be taught is the continued meditation of the Brahman as forming the Inner self of those particular intelligent and non-intelligent entities. Consequently, it is an established conclusion that he who is denoted by the words Indra and Prana here (i.e., in the context under reference) is the Supreme Self Himself, who is a different entity from the individual selves."

5. The Upanisads are the essence of the Vedas and they are to be interpreted in the metaphysical sense. Here it is more of tatparya (applicability of the inner meaning) than of padartha (applicability of the meaning of the word.) A whole upanisad is not required to praise the joys of heaven which have been amply described in the Puranas. The supporters of attributeless Brahman (nirguna brahma) may have to argue in terms of the popular heaven but even they are compelled to bring in vairaja attainable through a combination of karma and jnana.

One who has studied Naciketa Vidya in the *Taittiriya Brahmana* III.xi.7-9 and adopted the triple action (sacrifice-learning-gift or pakayajna-haviryajna-somayajna) establishes contact with the supreme soul through meditation. This meditation is in the form of the knowledge of itself which has Brahman as its soul. Since the term 'deva' in KU. I.i17 indicates the Supreme Soul and since there is no possibility of identity of the individual soul with the Supreme soul, the term has to take the force of 'one who has the supreme soul as one's soul'.

To such a meditator, the miseries of samsara are destroyed. In that state his 'mrtyupasa' in the form of attachment and hatred drop off even before physical death and transcending sorrow he delights in the world of moksa. (To be continued)

ADVISE TO GRADUATES

by

M.S. Rajajee I.A.S.

Cardinal Newman has Stated :

A University training aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspirations, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power and refining the intercourse of private life.

Even if some of the above aims and aspirations have been set for yourself by all of you, the purpose of your university education has been achieved.

I had occasion to mention that this was the end of an education and the beginning of a new education. You are now entering into a new world with hopes and aspirations; some of you have trepidation about the trials and tribulations. I do not blame you. The country is passing through a very difficult phase and India finds itself at the cross-roads in several respects.

Swami Ranganathananda says :

What is India today? A bit of a hell. We cannot trust each other. There is corruption among the citizens, in the administration and in politics. We cannot work together. We have lost the national vision and fallen under the tyranny of regional and caste loyalties. We more often pull each other down. We quarrel and fight on petty matters like linguistic, regional and water resources sharing issues. We resort to violence at the slightest provocation. Some thing has gone wrong somewhere during the last few decades. The spirit that had animated the nation during the struggle for freedom is not seen today. That spirit should have, on the other hand, animated the people of an undeveloped nation, like ours ten-fold in our post freedom period, in order to make that freedom

meaningful to the millions of our weaker sections. That has not happened and that has been our post-freedom tragedy.

It is against this background, as you walk into the future armed with the degrees you have received today, a great responsibility devolves on you. You have a challenging role in these difficult days. As the future citizen of this great country, you have to face the challenges and resolve the difficulties.

At the outset I wish to refer to the urgent need for tolerance. Without tolerance, there cannot be peace and without peace there cannot be development. Without development life has no meaning. In various parts of India and even in comparatively peaceful Tamilnadu, you see differences based on religion, and differences based on caste. Religious intolerance has to be stamped out and stamped out effectively. You, as students, might have come from a Christian college or a Muslim college or from a Hindu college, but all of you have graduated from this single University, the Madras University. The syllabus is the same, the exam you write is the same and the valuation is the same. The same commonality has to be reflected in the lives of all of you whether you are a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian. We must all realise that there is a unity to religion and that all religions preach the same theme—that all of us are children of God and that we ultimately go back to the same god. If you read the Bhagavad gita, it refers to all of us as being a part of the Supreme Self :

It is I who remain seated in the heart of all creatures, as the inner controller of all. And it is I who am the source of memory knowledge and the ratiocinative faculty. Again, I am the only object worth knowing through the Vedas. I alone am the father of the Vedanta and the knowledge of the Vedas too.

The New Testament says the same thing :

My dear people, we are already the children of the god but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He really is.

The Koran also says the same thing :

Unto Him belonged whatsoever is in the heavens and

whatsoever is in earth ; Who is he that intercedeth with Him, save by His leave? He knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind them, while they encompass nothing of His knowledge, save that He will; His throne includes the heavens and the earth and He is never weary of preserving them; He is the sublime, the Tremendous.

I have quoted from three main scriptures because it is essential for all of you at the formative stage of your life to know that there is a commonality in the religions. There is but one God; we call him by different names. There is one ocean; all the rivers fall into the ocean. If this is recognized, we will realize the futility of differences based on religion or caste. It is for you, who are educated, to take the message to the people and urge upon them to have tolerance. We must have tolerance if this country is to go ahead. We need a congruence of hearts and a confluence of religions, a respect for religious beliefs and views of others. I would like to add that when I am speaking about tolerance, I am not speaking just about religious tolerance, but tolerance in a broader sense of the term a tolerance for the other man's points of view, so that out of the thesis and the anti-thesis, a strong synthesis may emerge. You will then be partners in building a magnificent India - a country which will no longer be a sleeping giant but a resurgent country, whose voice is heard in the comity of nations.

I must share with you the story of the **Three Masons**. There were three masons who were building a mansion. When the first mason was asked what he was doing he stated that he was a bricklayer. The second mason stated that he was working for his wages. The third mason, with pride in his eyes, stated that he was a partner in the building of a magnificent edifice. Graduates of today, I want all of you to regard yourselves not as mere work seekers, not as mere prospective wage earners, but as partners in the building of the magnificent edifice called a **New India**. The building of this edifice is a distinct possibility. I would like to emphasise that each one of you has a certain greatness in you and if each one makes an earnest attempt, you will become great. I will quote a very interesting discussion which takes place in the **Chandogya Upanishad**. The discussion goes as follows:

"Bring a banyan fruit from there."

"Here it is my lord."

"Break it."

"It is broken, my lord."

"What do you see there?"

"These rather fine seeds, my lord."

"Well, break one of them."

"It is broken my lord."

"What do you see there."

"Nothing my lord."

"My boy, this finest essence which you do not perceive, verily, my boy, from that finest essence the large banyan tree thus arises. Believe me my boy. That finest essence which the world has for its self. That is the True, that is the Self. that you are, O Svetaketu"

Each one of you is a Svetaketu; each one of you has that divine spark which will enable you to grow like a banyan tree and have a crown which will be the envy of all. But the greatness will not come by itself. It will not descend on you. It requires a certain cleansing of the heart.

There is a parable which Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa told his followers. In a village there was a young man named Padmalochan. He was not very bright. In the village there was also a temple which had never been washed, which had never been swept, which was full of filth and dust and which had no image of God. Padmalochan being not very bright, felt that Divine Grace will descend on him, if he makes a lot of noise making use of a conch-shell. He did not realise that he had to establish a deity, that he had to cleanse the place and then seek the Grace of the Lord. In the same way we have to cleanse the heart, purify the place and then seek the Grace of God for that Divinity to emerge out of us. One has to dive deep, plunge to the bottom and gather up the gems, for invoking the divinity in, each one of us. So, my dear Graduates, dive deep into the sea of learning and you will come up with the gems. The jewel in the crown does not come and settle down by itself. It has to be found and it has to

be embedded. It then shines, in all its glory, in each one of us. To come up with the jewel, one has to continue to learn, continue to educate oneself.

Learning is an eternal exercise. We study in the University called Life. We learn from our mistakes. We should ever be students. I must here tell you a very interesting story which is said of Narada in the Chandogya Upanishad. Narada is very unhappy because he has no peace of mind. He goes to Sanathkumara and tells him that he has mastered all the Vedas and Upanishads but yet he has no peace of mind. Sanathkumara tells him that Narada has not mastered the Vedas or the Upanishads, but he has only mastered the words in them. It is the sound which has surrounded him, but not the underlying spirit of the vedas and Upanishads. Sanathkumara advises him to go back and study them once again so that he will understand the deep underlying philosophy and the significance behind the sacred texts so that he will have the requisite peace of mind. Great Truths always emerge in Parables.

I will retell another episode. There was a person, who thought that he had mastered the Bhagavad Gita and went to a king. He was very proud of his knowledge and approached the king stating that he has mastered the Bhagavad Gita. The king asked him to go back and read the Bhagavad Gita again and come back. The man went back, studied the Gita and came back. He asked him to go back and study the Gita again. This happened on 4 or 5 occasions and each time the man realised that like the facets of a gem, there were so many things in the Gita, many of which he had not understood. After some time the man did not come back to the king because he was wholly immersed in reading the Gita and understanding the entire inner meaning of what was stated there. After some time the king went to him and asked him why he had not come back. The man told him that he had not understood many things in the Bhagavad Gita. That is the beginning of intelligence.

In the Kena Upanishad it is stated as follow :

He who thinks he knows It not, knows It. He who thinks he knows It, Knows It not. The true knowers think they can never know It because of Its infinitude, while the ignorant think they know It.

This in essence, tells us that we have to go back again and again to our books, to our laboratories, to our research centres so that we will constantly refurbish our minds, our thought processes, our ideas and our outlook. Then we can face the challenges of life.

In this process, I do not want you to get disheartened thinking that there is a huge challenge facing you. I would once again quote from that scriptures.

It is said that when Lord Ramachandra was young, his tutors went to Dasaratha and told him that Ramachandra had lost all interest in the study of scriptures, he was not taking his lessons seriously, he was not eating properly, he has become greatly disinterested in everything. Dasaratha talks to Vasishtha and tells him that he should take Ramachandra under his wings and see that he comes out of the abysmal depths of unhappiness into which he seems to have fallen. Vasishtha gives a series of lectures to Ramachandra. This is known as the Yoga Vasishtha or the Supreme Yoga. At one place in the Yoga Vasishtha, Vasishtha tells Ramachandra, "Do not think that you are in a helpless condition. Be tolerant, composed and even minded. Pleasures and pains, death and birth; gain and loss; censure and praise; respect and disrespect are mere imaginations of the mind. There is only one Supreme truth and it is this alone that exists for ever. Do not think of the past or the future. Be calm and dispassionate. Be rational. Abandon all hopes and expectations. Be as full as the ocean and free from the cares of the world. Rise above love and hate. Have an equal vision over all. Rama is tranquil. Shine like a jewel with an internal light. Vasishtha adds" No one should walk in the wrong wonders. He who walks in the right path can work wonders. He can achieve any task howsoever difficult it may be. He will attain longevity, fame and self-realization. Dangers and difficulties flee from him. He has the power to bring destiny under his control." I can do no better than to commend you to follow what has been advised by the sage Vasishtha.

It has been said that in **EDUCATION**, **E** stand for enlightenment, **D** for Duty, **U** for Understanding, **C** for Character, **A** for Action, **T** for Truth, **I** for Integrity, **O** for Oneness, **N** for Nobility. Hence, if your education is to be deemed to be complete, you must have all the above qualities or atleast now onwards acquire

the above qualities. Truth has an important role. In today's topsy turvy life there is even greater need and importance for truth in one's life. I quote from the **Taittiriya Upanishad** :

Speak the truth. Practice virtue, you must not be negligent of the truth. You must not be negligent of virtue. You must not be negligent of study. Worship your mother worship your father, worship your teacher, worship the guest. Whatever acts are irreproachable, those you must do, and no others. Whatever deeds among us are good deeds, those you must do, and no others. Whatever deeds among us are good deeds, those you must perform, and no others. Give willingly. Do not give unwillingly. Give according to your resources. Give with modesty. Give with fear. Give with sympathy.

You must remember that it is only according to one's actions and according to one's conduct one become something or somebody in this world and the next. **Brihadaranyaka Upanishad** says :

According to one's actions, according to one's conduct so one becomes the doer of good becomes good, the doer of evil becomes evil; a man becomes virtuous by virtuous action, sinful by sin. Just as an embroiderer, taking off from the loom a piece of embroidered cloth, weaves another newer and more beautiful cloth, so this Self, creates another and more beautiful form.

That is why the Vedantins have said **SATYAM GNANAM ANANTAM BRAHMA**.

Along side of being dutiful, truthful, one should learn to be helpful. I would refer to **Neetichandrika** in which **Bhartrihari** made a classification of the society. He says that there are some **Satpurushas** or good people, who engage themselves for the good of others, sacrificing their self interest. There are others who engage themselves for the good of others, so long as it does not involve the sacrifice of their self interest. There is a third category who are the **manavarakshas**, people who for the sake of their enrichment, do evil to others. The last category consists of people, the devilish men, who sacrifice the good of other, not even for their self enrichment, but merely to be bad. It should be the aim

of all of you to see that in life you are categorized as Satpurushas. You have received education. You are advantageously placed. There are many people, the poor, the disadvantaged sections, who have not had the benefit of a school education, let alone a University education. These come from different social strata backward, the most backward and in a few cases among the forward sections. Please remember to help them. The benefits of society cannot go only to some. Ambedkar has said :

Our aim is to realise in practice, our ideal of one man, one value, in all walks of life political, economic and social.

It is to this that you have to address yourself. By an accident of birth or by an accident of circumstance, some of you are today better placed than others. It is the bounden duty of all of you to see that you help others. The Vedas proclaim that the persons who have crossed the sea of change, should help the others to do likewise. All of you together should progress, the forward and the backward, the rich and the poor. This is what is said in the Upanishads together, all together we shall toil and travel together, all together we shall steadily grow.

Swami Vivekananda has put it most effectively :

Work is our fundamental duty and to work for other is a greater duty which is cast on us. Every nation, every man and woman must work out their salvation. Give them ideas, that is the only help they require and then the rest must follow as the effect. Ours is to put together the chemicals. The crystallisation comes in the law of nature. That is what is to be done in India. Life is short; the vanities of the world are transient; but they alone live who live for others; the rest are more dead than alive.

If you do this you would be doing what Francis of Assisi had said

Make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

You would have achieved what the Vedas proclaim:

*"Asato ma sadgamaya
Tamaso ma jyothirgamaya"*

From the unreal lead me to the real; From darkness, lead me to light.

You would have, through your education and your work, lead people from darkness to light.

Your long years of education to acquire the degree are over. You are now embarking on a new journey, a new voyage of discovery, a voyage into the unknown. Aurobindo, in a different context, says in Savithri;

God's long nights are justified by dawn. There breaks a passion and splendour of new birth. The dreaming deities look beyond the seen. And fashion in their thoughts the ideal world...

Into a new world, I want you to walk. I began by painting a dreamy picture of the world. But as stated by Aurobindo, I look beyond the seen, I view, I see a vision - a vision of progress and prosperity, a vision of peace and piety, a vision where in all of you young men and women, are partners in a great enterprise called the re-building of this great country. I would conclude by quoting from a sanskrit poem:

Look well to this day, for it is life, the very best of life; in its brief course lie all the realities and truths of existence; the joy of growth, the splendour of action, the glory of creation. For yesterday is but a memory, and tomorrow only a vision. But today, if well lived makes every yesterday a memory of happiness, every tomorrow a vision of hope.

TIRUPPAVAI AND UPANISADS

(Contd. from previous issue)

5. The fountain of the six essential excellences inherent in Him. They are :-

(i) Omniscience.

Brahman (Narayana) Who is True, Conscious and Infinite.

Taittiriya. II.1.1

(ii) Unfailing Strength.

"His High Power is revealed as manifold, as inherent action, as knowledge, and Unfailing Strength." Svetas. VI.8

(iii) Paramount Sovereignty over the mundane as well as the ultramundane worlds.

"That Brahman (narayana) shines forth grand, divine, inconceivable, smaller than small; He shines resplendent (in His mighty power) far beyond what is far (in Tripadvibhuti = Paradise), yet near here (in Ekapadvibhuti) not only as the Golden Person seated in the sun, but also hidden in the cave of the heart among those who see Him as their Inner soul even here"

Mundaka. III.1.7

(iv) Valour

"The Supreme Being, in His incarnation as Narasimha (half man and half lion) is the most valourous, and of the highest excellence." Nrisimha II.4.

(v) Power (Infinite)

"His (Narayana's) Power is manifold, and is of the highest order." Svetas. VI.8.

(vi) Essence of concentrated Glory

"O Lord show thyself as essence of concentrated glory" Isavasya. I.16

7.10 The Prime Cause and Creator, Protector and Destroyer of the Universe, which He does at pleasure.

(1) "That (Narayana) from Whom these beings are born, that by Whom, when born, they live, That into Whom they enter at their death, try to know That. That is Brahman." Tait. III.1

(2) "The Lord who takes a sportive delight in controlling the affairs of the Universe." Maitri. V.1.

This manifests the triumphant Glory of the Lord in this mundane universe :

"He (Narayana) Who understands the nature of all things, and who knows their characteristics as well in detail. To Him all the Glory of this universe belongs." Mundaka. II.2.7.

8. The Inner-soul of all creation animate and inanimate.

"He Who dwells in the individual soul, and who is different from the latter (individual soul)... He who dwells in the earth and who is different from the same; He who dwells in water, and who is different from that element, He who dwells in the ether, and who is different from that element." Brihad. III. 7, 2.

9. The Being who is a terror to the recalcitrant and a refuge to the obedient.

"That Brahman (Narayana) is a great Terror, like a drawn sword to all recalcitrant objects (breakers of His commandments) who had their origin from Him; and those who know Him (acting up to His commandments) become immortal."

"From Terror of Brahman fire burns, from the same the sun burns (shines); from (His) terror Indra (rains), and Vayu (blows) and Death runs away as the fifth (Panchama)." Katha. II.6, 2-3.

(2) "May we be able to approach that Lord, the Highest Imperishable Brahman, who is attainable by the Nachiketa rite, who himself is the bridge (of salvation) for sacrificers (devotees); and who is the safest Bank and Refuge to those who wish to cross the Ocean of misery and unhappiness(samsara)

(3) "This (Narayana) is the Immortal, the safest Refuge, this is Brahman." Chandog. IV. 15,1.

10. The Bestower of eternal Bliss and Immortality.

"Those who know Him (Brahman) become immortal, whereas others suffer pain indeed." Brihad. IV,4,14.

(2) "For I am the abode of Brahman, the Immortal and the Immutable, as also of the eternal Law (Dharma) and of the Unfailing Bliss." Gita XIV, 27.

11. The relative of all beings in every respect.

"He who is our father, Progenitor, and Protector." Rig.X82,3.

(2) "I am the Father of this Universe, the Mother, the Supporter and Grandsire," Bhagavadgita. IX, 17.

12. The All pervading Being

"He (Narayana) is the Lord who has His eyes, His face, His arms, and His feet in every place throughout all space."

Rigveda. X.81,3.

(2) "The Infinite (Lord Narayana) is indeed below, above, behind, before, right and left. (It) is indeed all this."

Chandog VII 25,1.

13. The supporter of all creatures animate and inanimate.

"The Lord supports all this together, the perishable and the imperishable, the developed and the undeveloped." Svetas. I.8.

14. The Paramount Lord or Sovereign over all creation animate and inanimate

"He (Narayana) is the Lord of all, the King of all beings, the Protector of all things."

Brihad.IV.4,22.

15. The Inner-soul of all things

"The Supreme Self (Narayana) pervades everything like butter (ghee) contained in milk."

Svetas. I,16.

16. The Being approached and adored by all

"This Paramatman, who rests eternally as Inner'soul within the individual self, should be known, and beyond This there is nothing else to the known."

Svetas.I,12.

Now that the fundamental characteristics of the Supreme Lord (I'svara) and the individual soul have been briefly understood, an attempt may be made here to explain and analyse the relationship that subsists between these two entities. With reference to this question, there was unfortunately some occasion for the Indian Philosophers and Reformers to entertain different views. Now what is the nature of this relationship? One set of philosophers relying upon certain Vedic Texts-such as tattramaci maintain that this relationship is one of identity; that the supreme being, Parabrahman, manifests itself as Isvara on being approached and affected by Maya (Prakriti), and then performs the process of creation, preservation and destruction; that during this stage that very Being is seen as Jiva or individual soul owing to the influence of Avidya (Ignorance). This doctrine is variously styled as Non-Dualism, Advaitism, or Idealistic Monism, and found in modern times its greatest and most renowned supporter in Sri

Bhagavan Sankara-charya. Again, another set of philosophers, relying upon certain other Vedic Texts equally important went as it were, to the other extreme, and maintain that the two entities are quite different and independent, that the One is the Being of infinite Wisdom and the other is the finite individual soul, affected with ignorance, and hence holds a dependent or subordinate position. This doctrine stands as the basis of Dualism, the staunchest supporter of which in modern times is Sri Bhagavan Madhavacharya. A third set of philosophers, adopting the principle of the golden mean, maintain that no Vedic Texts should be considered Gauna or unimportant relatively and that all passages referring to the nature of the Parabrahman (Supreme Being) are equally authoritative, and that, in explaining them, one should aim at a rational reconciliation. The system propounded by these philosophers is known as Visistadvaitism (Vaishnavism) or Qualified Non-Dualism or Advaitism. According to this system, the texts referring to the apparent identity of Brahman and the individual soul such as

- (1) ... Ō Swetaketu, Thou art It. Chandogyya.
- (2) ... This soul is the Brahman.... do....
- (3) ... I am Brahman ... do ...
- (4) ... This Universe has Parabrahman (Sat) as its soul.
Chandog.
- (5) ... All this universe is Brahman indeed.

should be construed as referring to a relationship of co-existence as eternal and inseparable as the entities themselves, similar to what is noticeable in this world (if we are to apply human similes) between substance and Attribute or between the body and soul or between the object (such as gold) and its various modifications such as gold bracelet, gold necklace, finger ring, gold zone; gold rings etc. As for those texts of the Upanishads such as

- (1) Two birds (The individual soul and the Supreme Spirit) inseparable friends, cling to the same tree. Rigveda. I. 164.20.
- (2) "There are two, one knowing (Isvara), the other not-knowing (jiva); one-the Lord, the other a dependent." Svetasvatara, I.8.
- (3) "The one God controls both Matter and Spirit."
Svetasvatara. I.9.

which refer to their apparently independent existence, it is to be observed that these texts refer only to the mental analysis.

of the two inseparable entities, and that they are never seen to exist independent of each other. The most lucid, happy, and powerful exposition of this doctrine was made by Sri Bhagavan Ramanujacharya in his Sri Bhashya.

This immutable relationship, though eternally existing, is not recognised by the individual soul as long as it is affected with Avidya or Ignorance, and hence confined within the narrow limits of the material body. All the same, this relationship eternally exists, although there was no recognition of the same on the part of the individual soul and it remains unaffected for ever and ever. When the human soul understands its real nature by the Grace of God through a competent spiritual preceptor, this relationship is brought home to the human being. This situation is not inaptly compared in the Upanishads to that of person who have been daily walking over the very spot where the treasure they seek after is hidden, without the least knowledge of the existence of this important treasure at that very spot, the original passage so tersely expressed in the Upanishad being :-

"As people who do not know the country, walk again and again over a gold treasure that has been hidden somewhere in the same, and do not discover it, thus do all these creatures day after day approach Parabrahman (Lord Narayana) Seated as the Inner soul in the human heart, and yet do not realise Him, because they are led astray by Untruth or Ignorance." Chandog. VIII,3,2.

To take another illustration, a very young boy, after a lapse of several years, comes in contact with his father who had been separated from him several years ago, but has not been able for some time to recognise him as such though he used to see him almost daily; and from enquiries casually made and duly substantiated through his mother, the boy subsequently recognises in him the father, and finally identifies as his own parent, and then mutual recognition is the result.

Hence it will be seen that the aim of mankind has been to get a clear conception of this divine eternal relationship; and the prophets, messiahs and saviours of each nation have been making honest endeavours, with the help of superior knowledge and genius they were endowed with, to unravel this mystery as far as possible, so as to be within the reach and comprehension of ordinary mortals. The communications of these spiritual leaders have been preserved in their own respective sacred writings. Man, by virtue of his innate tendency implanted in him endeavours to raise himself to a higher level in the scale of spiritual development.

Sometimes the material part of his nature has the better of him, when he surrenders himself to low passions and desires; or his spiritual nature reigns supreme, when virtuous and noble deeds are done, or noble thoughts entertained at the dictation of his moral principle. He aspires to elevated knowledge, but he cannot attain to it, clogged as he is with a material covering. "Man wishes" writes Dr. Bremser, the German Naturalist, "to make out the primary causes of all that exists, but he cannot get at them. With less intellectual faculty, he would not have had the presumption even to desire to know these causes; and if he were more richly endowed, they would have been clear to him." On the same question Dr. Pouchet, the French naturalist and philosopher states "In man matter and spirit exist in almost equal parts, that is to say, man is half spirit and half matter. Bremser, in advancing this proposition takes his stand upon the fact that in man it is some times spirit which governs and subdues matter, and sometimes matter which dictates laws to spirit with equal power and success on the side of each." Even such beings as are generally recognised in the world as the Avatars or incarnations or prophets, whose intellects were undoubtedly of a very high order, have tried their best to communicate their "Revelations" to their respective fellow countrymen in such language as they considered simplest for human intelligence, through their respective native or sacred tongues. Above all, the Vedas, and other sacred "Words of God" have attempted to explain and communicate to mankind the real nature of this mysterious relationship as much as possible, declaring at the same time that the conception of God is so sublime and grand and infinite that it is really incomprehensible and unknowable to the fullest extent. The first conception of the Almighty Being as found in the Holy Vedas is briefly summed up thus. "Perfect Truth; perfect Happiness; without equal; Immortal; Absolute Unity whom neither speech can describe nor mind comprehend; All pervading; All transcending; Delighted with His own boundless Intelligence not limited by space or time; without Feet, moving slowly; without Hands, grasping all worlds; without Eyes, all surveying; without Ears, all hearing; without an intelligent guide, understanding all; without cause, the First of all causes; All ruling; All powerful; The Creator, Preserver, Transformer of all thing; such is the Great One." S.W. Jone's Works Vol. VI (Vide Lord Gouranga or salvation for all, Vol. II)

As a description of the First cause and Supreme Being this conception has never been equalled. This is as grand as the Object Itself. But the Being described above did not come within the

comprehension of the ordinary man of limited powers who hankered after a friendly Protector, a Companion and an Object of Love. There is in the heart of almost every man an ardent desire for a communion with God, more or less developed according to his constitution or training "the desire is universal, and is felt by almost every one, at one time of his life or other, for a closer intimacy with the mysterious Being who gave him life." (Lord Gourang Vol.II.p.)

Various have been the attempts, more or less successful, on the part of the great saints and sages at different times in different countries, to meet this universal want by explaining in an intelligible and simple way this sublimest conception of God, so that they may be easily comprehensible. In our own land, amongst the various attempts at elucidation of this divine mysterious relationship, the one current in Southern India amongst the Dravidians and highly approved of and systematised by the Alvars (Divine apostles) and recommended for adoption by subsequent Acharyas treats of the same in a most popular manner, so as to be pretty intelligible even to the ordinary masses (Nadunagaramunangariya, and is in conformity with the social and domestic functions and relationship which are frequently exercised in course of their daily avocations and with which they are familiar. Hence such social domestic similes as father and son, husband and wife, mother and child, master and servant, friend and friend, proprietor and Property etc. are often employed to denote this sublime and mysterious conception; and this idea is very tersely expressed in the following well known Sanscrit distich:

The Almighty Lord Narayana, Consort of Lakshmi, may be conceived as holding any of the following nine relationship with reference to the human soul" (a) father (b) Protector (c) appropriator (d) up holder (e) the known (f) master or Lord (g) container (h) Soul (i) enjoyer.

Hence the mutual relationship subsisting between the Supreme Lord Parabrahman on the one hand and the individual or human soul on the other, may be brightly expressed thus :-

(a) Father & Son (b) The protector & the protected (c) The appropriator & the Appropriable (d) The Upholder & the upheld (husband & wife) (e) the knowable & the knower (f) The proprietor & the property (master & servant) (g) The container & the Contained (h) Soul & Body (i) The enjoyer & the enjoyable.

(to be continued)

SRI STITHUTI

By. Srinivasan

(Contd. from last issue.)

Puspasara etc : A group of clouds including Puskala and Avarta started showering flowers, covering the world like a screen. The words puskala and avarta also serve to indicate the density and the continuity of the flower shower. Lakshmi is fond of flowers. She is known as Padma priya and Padma Varnavasini. There fore, the floral tribute was appropriate. A rainy day is called durdina or a bad day in Sanskrit, but the rain of flowers, though caused by several clouds, here resulted in an auspicious day.

Kiptarambhah... gajendrah : The word abhyasincun used here is the same as that employed by Valmiki in the coronation of Rama. In the Rama Pattabhiseka, elephant sized Vanaras brought sacred water. Here vanaras or elephants themselves performed the ablution. It was the elephant Airavata which crushed Lakshmi's garland under its feet. The same Airavata came out of the milky ocean as a result of its churning, it is one of the eight mighty elephants supporting the eight quarters of the world. To cope its sin, the other brother elephants joined it and performed the coronation of the mother of the universe with water from gold vessels.

Sloka 14

alokya tvam amrtasahaje visnuvaksasthalastham
Sapakrantas' saranam agaman savarodhas surendrah
labdhva bhiyas tribhuvanam idam laksitam tvat kataksaih
sarvakara sthira samudayam sampadam nirvisanti

"Mahalakshmi who emerged from the milky ocean along with ambrosia! seeing you firmly ensconced in the broad chest of Vishnu. Indra and other gods, who were afflicted by the curse of Sage Durvasa, took refuge in you along with their better halves. Your benign side glances enabled them to regain the opulence of the three worlds and they now enjoy permanent and increasing prosperity."

This sloka recapitulates briefly the events after the appearance of Lakshmi and Her coronation, and dwells on the greatness of the benign looks of the Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity. The first part depicts saranagati to her by the devas with their better halves, and the second half its good result.

alokya tvam... vakshas sthalatham : First, Dhanvantri appeared with nectar in a vessel and then came Mahalakshmi. Making ambrosia, which sustains life to come out first. Lakshmi came later. She did not stop with that. She proceeded and occupied Her rightful place, the expansive chest of Visnu. When she was seated on the flowery throne in front of her Lord, there might have been a doubt whether the ultimate cause of the Universe was Sri or Visnu, but when she became one with Him by ascending His chest, the truth became clear to all that the two together constitute the supreme divinity. Understanding this, the gods took refuge in Her. When both the parents are at hand, the children are bound to have their wishes fulfilled.

Apart from Her appearing together with nectar in the Ksirabdi Lakshmi resembles ambrosia in being sweet and life giving. Hence she is appropriately addressed here as amrta sahaja

Visnu's form is huge and His chest expansive enough for Lakshmi to settle down there comfortably. This is indicated by Vaksas sthala. Tirumangai Alvar observes that the Lord's form looked as if it was an ocean standing up and churning another ocean.

Sapakrantah..... surendrah Great distress was caused to the gods by the curse of Durvasa. Devas therefore performed saranagathi to Sri, with their wives in their front. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, they wanted to show how their families were suffering as a result of penury. Secondly, being prone to oppose the Lord occasionally, they were afraid that He might be angry with them. Hence, as Sugriva sent forth Tara before meeting an angry Lakshmana, devas placed their better halves before

themselves. Further, women are the special objects of Lakshmi's favour. Last but not the least Visnu is favourably inclined towards those in the good looks of Sri.

Both the husband and wife have equal rights to prapathi and it is sure to be effective when it is made together to the divine couple.

The devas did not take refuge in Lakshmi as soon as she emerged from the ocean, nor even on her coronation, but only after she graced the chest of Visnu. From this we get the clear message that prapathi is not to be made to Lakshmi alone, but only to Her in the company of Her Lord.

In the previous sloka the expiator of the elephants on behalf of gajendra (Airavata) was explained. Here the prayas'citta of the deities on behalf of Indra is described.

Labdhvabhayah etc Being graced by the benign glance of Lakshmi, the gods got back all their lost affluence of the three worlds and are enjoying its permanently and in an increasing measure. This is ningada selvam niraindu, as Andal puts it aptly in Tiruppavai (3). Wealth obtained from other gods will neither be plentiful nor permanent nor ever-increasing, but here being directly granted by the Goddess of plenty and prosperity, their cup was full to the brim.

Sloka 15

Erta tranavrtibhiramrta sara nilambu vahaih
ambhojaman ugasi misatam antarangairapangaih
yasyam yasyam disi viharate devi dristis tvadiya
tasyamtasyam ahamahamikam tanyate sampadogah

"Devi I Your eyes have taken a vow to afford protection to the distressed. They resemble dark clouds which are ready to shower life giving nectar. Further, they are like the lotuses which bloom little by little early in the morning just before sun rise. In whichever direction your side glances happen to play, in such direction floods of wealth and prosperity flow out, competing with one another."

arta trana vratibhih- When the world feels unable to bear the oppressive heat of the Sun, a heavy downpour from the clouds is a great blessing. Likewise when a man is in acute distress unable to find a way out, God goes to his rescue. He is, therefore, known as arta trana parayanah. This title He earned when He rushed, with hurricane like hurry, to the rescue of Gajendra who was in a very critical situation. He has maintained that name ever since.

SriRama expressed his vow thus in the famous sloka of Valmiki (Yuddhakanda 18-33) "I vouchsafe security against all living beings to him who approaches me but once and seeks protection from me, pleading 'I am yours'. Such is my vow.'

Further when Sita seemingly objected to his resolve to wipe out Raksasas and afford protection to the sages afflicted by them, he declared (Aranya 10-18,19)

" I can even give up my life or you together with Lakshmana but not my plighted word, given especially to Brahamans". Being the consort of Visnu, Lakshmi plays the same role as befits Her being His sahadharma cari

vratibhish : Vrata or vow is the determination to fulfil the task under taken at any cost. The vow of Lakshmi is to protect those who approach Her from distress. This is more important to Her than anything else. Her side glances perform this task with ease. They do not stop with redressing distress as a soothing balm, they also shower prosperity on the recipients to the extent that they cry 'enough, enough'. When clouds start raining, they do not cease when we want. When people are asleep when they least expect it, the cloud rain torrentially, making high and low areas alike float in flood waters. In a similar manner, Sri rains prosperity without limit.

Vrata or vow indicates that if it is not fulfilled, it will be a loss not to those in distress, but to the person undertaking it. If a vow is given up, it will only redound to the discredit of the person who undertook it. Lakshmi, therefore, protects Her devotees who

are affected, as though it is for Her own benefit, as an inalienable duty cast upon her by the use of the transferred epithet, the vow of Lakshmi has been described as that of the benign glances.

Amrtasara : The word amrta has the meanings of nectar, water and immortality. The glances of Sri are sweet and life giving like nectar, they are cool and refreshig like rain water from the cloud and they shower immortality on Her votaries. Rain bearing clouds produce a cooling effect. Visnu's complexion is blue like a rainy cloud and is a dispeller of tapa or heat, which includes agitation of the mind which is experiencing distress. Visnu's very presence is enough to put an end to all agony. Lakshmi's eyes are dark and have a very soothing effect on the afflicted. Her side glance produce an ameliorating effect like ambrosia

Nilambuvahaih : clouds become pale after discharging rain, but not the eyes of Lakshmi which ever remain black. They are therefore, described as dark clouds. Earlier it was said that she protects people as if it was for her own benefit. Now, the bounty underlying the grace is mentioned. It is like that of the clouds which shower rain in plenty without expecting anything in return.

ambhoyanam... apangaih : clouds pouring torrential rains are accompanied by thunder and lightning which make people afraid, but the eyes of Mahalakshmi showering prosperity, compared to clouds here do not cause any such fear. They resemble lotuses which are just blooming and are therefore pleasing to look at. While lotuses bloom in the early morning, there eyes become enlarged at the time of protecting the distressed. In the world it is hard to find the face of a donor exuding happiness but Lakshmi's eyes are brimming with joy.

Yasyam... sampadogah : The word disi stands for all those living in a particular direction. In whichever direction, at whichever time Lakshmi casts her glances, all those living there will have perfect joy due to being far above want in every respect. Here glances transcend time and space. Viharate used as atmane-pada indicates that the action is meant for Her own benefit. The

word devi is derived from the root dive meaning "to play". The nature of Sri is playfulness and it is appropriate that Her glances are said to be playful. Drsti refers to glances caused by compassion. Showering of prosperity is but play for Her glances, accomplished with ease, merely as a diversion, without any other thought. Being generous and large hearted, she does not decide which kind of prosperity should be bestowed on the people concerned, with the result that every kind of wealth rushes to them, competing with each other. Had she decided on any one of them, that alone would have gone.

Riches run in the direction to which her glances are directed. Savarodhah means heaps of prosperity. The repetitions yadyam yasyam, tasyam tasyam as also ahamahamika serve to underline the abundance of the munificence that is showered. The wealth bestowed by the lord will be limited, according to the merits of our past karmas and will also be exhausted with their exhaustion, but the opulence conferred by Sri is unlimited and inexhaustible. Further, a father always has in view the good of his children and because of that he punishes them also at times, but a mother is keen only on pleasing her offsprings. Visnu has said "I snatch away the affluence of him whose well-being I wish; and he acts accordingly, but Lakshmi never does any such thing. It may be asked whether such abundant affluence granted by Her will not constitute a hindrance to the development of vairagya or dispassion, and lead to the person's ultimate destruction. The answer is an emphatic 'no'. A mother gives sweets to her children knowing their capacity to digest them. Only wealth not used for charity and other good caused will produce unhealthy results. By Her grace the recipient will channel his wealth to proper and useful purposes. Further, if it is prosperity prayed for by the person, it may perish, but thier abundance, being granted by her own accord remains lasting and overflowing.

It is interesting to note that in Srivmad Bhagvatam, when Rukmini desired to confer the fabulous affluence of Kubera on Kucela, she enquired from which direction he had come, so that

she could cast her benovelant glance in that direction, directing all aisvaryas to rush to his home in advance of his return.

Sloka 16

Yogambha tvarite amanase Yusmadaikantya yuktam
dharmam praptum pralthamamiha ye dtharayanta dhanayam
tejam bhumer dhanapati grhart ambarat ambudher va
dharaniryantyadhikam adlikam vancitanam vasunam

"There are some whose minds are keen on enbarking on karma yoga, who wish to perform sacrifices with single-minded devotion to you and your Lord as a part of karmayoga, and desire the wherewithal for that purpose. Streams of the wealth desired arise and reach them in increasing measure from the earth, from the mansion of Kubera from the sky or from the sea."

In the previous verse it was stated how Lakshmi of Her own volition, without prayer from the person concerned, showers prosperity on him. Now, how opulence is bestowed on those seeking is stated. The two catagories of persons in the previous and present stanzas refer to arta and artharthi, the first and third of the four kinds of devotees mentioned in Gita (7-16)

Yogambha... yuktam: the summum bonum of life is the realisation of God through bhakti yoga. The realisation of the individual self or atmavalokana is a stepping stone in that direction. Yamuna declares in Gitartha sangraha(2): "In the first group of six chapters are enjoined, for the sake of success in realising the experience of the individual self in its pureform, the disciplines of the Karma and Jnana yogas, which have the vision of the individual self for that objective and which are well defined." The experience of the individual self may be gained either through karmayoga followed by Jnana yoga as taught in Chapter II of the Gita, or by Karmayoga directly when it contains within itself an element of Jnanayoga, as explained in Chapters III to IV thereof.

In the present sloka, the word yoga refers to karma yoga. For all the four types of worshlppers mentioned in Gita (7-16)

Karma Yoga is essential. Till atmavalokana is achieved, the aspirant has to keep on performing Karma yoga, which includes performance of sacrifices, giving of gifts etc. Brihadaranyaka Upanisad (4-4-22) says : "Brahmanas desire to know the aforesaid brahman by reciting the Vadas, by sacrifices, by giving gifts and by religious austerities associated with fasting'. Gita (3-9) mentions" this world of embodied selves in the circuit of samsara is subject to the bondage of karma in every action except in the case of work done for the purpose of sacrifice"

The Gita Bhasaya of Ramanuja explains that if sacrifice and other karmas prescribed in the sastras are under-taken by the aspirant free from attachment, the Supreme person, pleased by them, bestows on him an undisturbed vision of the individual self in its pure form. Gita (3-20) further avers 'solely by means of karmayoga, indeed, did Janaka and such other sages attain to pefection.'

Dharamam praptum... dhanayam - for the performance of karma yoga, wealth has to be sought and obtained by righteous means. There are many ways in which a man may go about it. One may approach wealthy people or pray to other gods for that purpose. But the ekantin, he who is solely devoted to Narayana and Sri resorts only to the divine pair for obtaining whatever he wants including riches. He is activated by awyabhicarini bhaktih devotion with undivided attention and associated with no other object' as cited in Gita (13-10). Devotion to other deities is thereby eschewed. Aikantyaynktam dharma, ie dharma associated with single minded devotion as stated above, found in the beginning stages of yoga that means karmayoga. Such an aspirant prays to the pair of Narayana and Sri for adequate means to pursue karma yoga. Lakshmi grants whatever he desires in more than the expected measure

There is the further stage of the paramarkantin in which the devotee is not interested in obtaining other small benefits from God, but only God himself. Such people may not pray for affluence from the Lord, but all the same He knows their need and grants them the necessary plenitude. (to be continued)

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